

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03

PRS-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 EB-08 SIL-01 LAB-04

/064 W

-----121412 091340Z /53

P R 091217Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3685

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

CINCUSAFE

7206 ABG HELLENIKON

6931 ABS IRAKLION

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MARR, GR

SUBJECT: STRIKE AT IRAKLION AIR STATION

REF: ATHENS 6854 (DTG 221322Z JUL 77)

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. GREEK EMPLOYEES AT THE USAF IRAKLION AIR STATION ON CRETE HELD A 24-HOUR STRIKE DECEMBER 7. THE STRIKE WAS CALLED TO PROTEST THE SEPARATION OF FOUR CUSTODIAL WORKERS. A SMALL GROUP OF GREEK EMPLOYEES AT THE STATION GATHERED AT THE MAIN GATE OF THE FACILITY DURING THE MORNING BUT DID NOT ENGAGE IN PICKETING. THEY LEFT IN MID-MORNING TO ATTEND A UNION MEETING IN DOWNTOWN IRAKLION. ACTIVITIES ON THE FACILITY CONTINUED NORMALLY WITH UMS. PERSONNEL FILLING ESSENTIAL POSITIONS TEMPORARILY. THERE WERE NO INCIDENTS REPORTED AND ALL EMPLOYEES RETURNED TO WORK DECEMBER 8.

2. THE FOUR DISMISSED WORKERS WERE EMPLOYED IN CLEANING THE ROOMS OF INDIVIDUAL ENLISTED MEN. ENLISTED MEN UTILIZING THEIR SERVICES WERE REQUIRED TO PAY A FEE. AS LABOR COSTS, AND CONSEQ-
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UENTLY THE FEES LEVIED ON THE ENLISTED MEN, INCREASED OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, MANY ENLISTED MEN OPTED TO CLEAN THEIR OWN ROOMS. WITHOUT SUFFICIENT FEES FROM THE ENLISTED MEN, FUNDS WERE INADEQUATE TO MEET THE PAYROLL OF SEVEN CLEANERS EMPLOYED IN THE BARRACKS. TWO WERE TRANSFERRED TO OTHER WORK, ONE RETIRED VOLUNTARILY, AND THE REMAINING FOUR WERE SEPARATED EFFECTIVE DECEMBER 7. TWO OF THESE FOUR WERE IMMEDIATELY HIRED BY THE FACILITY

MAINTENANCE CONTRACTOR, PACIFIC ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS.

3. ACCORDING TO UNION LEADERS, THEIR MEMBERS WERE ANGERED, TO THE POINT OF DEMANDING A PROTEST STRIKE, BY THE HIRING OF TWO AMERICAN DEPENDENTS TO REPLACE THE DISMISSED GREEK WORKERS. WE UNDERSTAND A GROUP OF ENLISTED MEN JOINED TOGETHER INFORMALLY AND WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION HIRED TWO DEPENDENTS. THIS ARRANGEMENT WAS HALTED AFTER ONE OR TWO DAYS WHEN THE FACILITY COMMANDER WAS INFORMED OF IT. THEIR EMPLOYMENT WITHOUT GOG WORK PERMITS WOULD HAVE BEEN ILLEGAL.

4. THE LOCAL PRESS IN IRAKLION AND THE COMMUNIST PRESS IN ATHENS HAVE CARRIED STORIES IN CONNECTION WITH THE STRIKE CRITICIZING LABOR CONDITIONS AT U.S. MILITARY FACILITIES AND THE GOG'S ALLEGED FAILURE TO ENSURE THAT PROVISIONS OF GREEK LAW ARE HONORED BY AMERICAN AUTHORITIES ON MILITARY FACILITIES. END UNCLASSIFIED.

5. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. COMMENT: THROUGH EXPERIENCE WE HAVE LEARNED THAT ANY GROUP SEPARATIONS OF GREEK EMPLOYEES AT U.S. MILITARY FACILITIES FOR WHATEVER REASONS ARE PROTESTED BY THE AFFECTED WORKERS' UNION. ON THIS AND ANOTHER OCCASION EARLIER THIS YEAR (REFTEL) EMPLOYEE SEPARATIONS HAVE ALSO BEEN USED BY LEFTIST OPPONENTS OF THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN GREECE AS PEGS FOR ATTACKS ON OUR MILITARY PRESENCE AND THE GOG. IN CONVERSATIONS WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS, THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNION REPRESENTING GREEK WORKERS AT IRAKLION, HELLENIKON, AND NEA MAKRI HAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NOT BEEN PERSUADED THAT OVER-REACTION TO LABOR DISPUTES BY THE UNION PLAYS INTO THE HANDS OF THOSE SEEKING TO ABOLISH U.S. FACILITIES AND, INCIDENTALLY, THE JOBS OF HIS MEMBERS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT PASOK DEPUTIES WHO ATTENDED THE UNION MEETING IN IRAKLION ON DECEMBER 7 MADE STATEMENTS CALLING FOR THE CLOSING OF U.S. MILITARY FACILITIES. PERHAPS SOME WORKERS NOW SEE THE CONNECTION.

6. THE EMBASSY AND THE APPROPRIATE U.S. MILITARY COMMANDS HAVE MADE A COORDINATED EFFORT TO LESSEN THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF GROUP SEPARATIONS. OFFICIALS AT THE MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND LABOR, AS WELL AS THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF GREEK LABOR (GSEE), WERE INFORMED CONFIDENTIALLY IN ADVANCE BY THE EMBASSY ABOUT THE SEPARATIONS CONTEMPLATED AT IRAKLION AND THE REASONS FOR THIS ACTION. THE CHARGE ALSO DISCUSSED THE MATTER WITH DEFENSE MINISTER AVEROFF, WHO HAS HAD TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS IN PARLIAMENT ABOUT SUCH MATTERS. WHILE REGRETTING THE NECESSITY FOR THE SEPARATIONS, ALL EXPRESSED THEIR APPRECIATION FOR BEING BRIEFED IN ADVANCE. IN ALL CASES WE HAVE STRESSED THAT THE PROVISIONS OF GREEK LAW ON DISMISSALS WERE BEING APPLIED SCRUPULOUSLY BY THE U.S. FORCES. IN THIS RECENT CASE AT IRAKLION WE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THE SEPARATION OF THESE WORKERS HAD BEEN DELAYED BECAUSE OF THE NOVEMBER 20 ELECTIONS.

7. WE DO NOT EXPECT THAT OUR EFFORTS TO FOREWARN SENIOR GOVERNMENT AND LABOR OFFICIALS OF PENDING SEPARATIONS WILL HAVE NOTICEABLE EFFECT ON THE MORE UNSOPHISTICATED LABOR LEADERS AND THEIR MEMBERS OR ON THOSE WHO ARE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED IN SEEKING PRETEXTS TO CRITICIZE THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE HERE. HOWEVER, THEY DO HAVE A POSITIVE EFFECT WITH THOSE, LIKE MINISTER AVEROFF, WHO MAKE THE DECISIONS CONCERNING GOVERNMENT POLICY ON U.S. MILITARY OPERATIONS AND ARE CALLED UPON TO DEFEND U.S.-GREEK DEFENSE RELATIONSHIPS IN PARLIAMENT. MILLS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LABOR STRIKES
Control Number: n/a
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
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Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 ATHENS 6854
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30-Aug-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 301019
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STRIKE AT IRAKLION AIR STATION
TAGS: MARR, GR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbs://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/83af2308-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009